

February 12, 2009

I rise today as a co-sponsor and strong supporter of H. Con. Res. 35, a resolution to recognize the 100th anniversary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and acknowledge the numerous contributions of the NAACP in helping create a more just and equitable society.

The NAACP is the oldest and largest civil rights organization in the United States. For the past 100 years, the association has fought actively and fervently for equal justice for all Americans under the idea that all men and women are created equal.

In February 1909, a handful of courageous and fearless citizens--including Ida Wells Barnett, Mary White Ovington, Oswald Garrison Villiard, William English Walling, Henry Moscowitz and W.E.B. Du Bois--formed the National Negro Committee with the intent of addressing the social, economic and political rights of African-Americans. This organization would later become the NAACP, and for the next century would dedicate itself to eliminating racial hatred and ending racial discrimination.

The NAACP has accomplished and will continue to accomplish great things for our nation. In 1954, the NAACP achieved one of its greatest victories in the Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka case when the Supreme Court overturned segregation in the nation's public schools. This decision rendered "separate but unequal" unconstitutional. More importantly it helped to break down the barriers that divided the nation.

Through nonviolent methods such as protests, marches and media outreach the NAACP was instrumental in moving President Truman's Executive Order banning discrimination in the armed forces. The NAACP also played an active role in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The NAACP continues to fight for the rights of Americans confined to the corners of our society. The NAACP maintains active branches nationwide, including one in the 12th District of New Jersey, located in Trenton. I am grateful to the NAACP members who live in my Congressional District including Edith Savage-Jennings, a pioneer of the civil rights movement. The work they do to continue to advance the struggle for civil rights in our country is an inspiration to us all.

The NAACP gracefully and tirelessly has fought for the political, social, economic, and educational rights of all Americans, and has sought to ensure that our nation recognized the inalienable rights of all citizens, regardless of race, class, or ethnicity. They have paved the way for some of our most celebrated leaders like my good friend John Lewis and President Barack Obama to accomplish what they have. Moving forward the NAACP will shift its focus to ensure the attainment of human rights for all; a noble, honorable and needed effort. The enormity of the NAACP's contributions these past 100 years is immeasurable, and I am certain that the next 100 years will produce more accomplishments and milestones for this historic and vital organization. I am proud to join with my colleagues in supporting this resolution.